

**CLAIMS:**

1. A control system for automated lights, comprising:
  - a controller having an output signal comprising a plurality of channels transmitted repeatedly in sequence;
  - at least one addressable receiver for operating an automated light, the receiver being connected to the controller and arranged to receive at least some of the channels;
  - wherein the controller is arranged to encode instructions for the or each receiver and send each encoded instruction using a predetermined number of consecutive channels of the output signal, the predetermined number being at least two;
  - and wherein the receiver is arranged to combine information received from the predetermined number of consecutive channels to form one encoded instruction, decode the encoded instruction, and operate the automated light on the basis of the decoded instruction.
2. A control system as claimed in claim 1, wherein:
  - the receiver comprises a memory;
  - the encoded instruction refers to a location in said memory;
  - and the receiver is arranged to decode the instruction by accessing the referred memory point.
3. A control system as claimed in claim 1, wherein the encoded instruction corresponds to an entry in a database and the receiver is arranged to decode the encoded instruction by accessing the database.
4. A control system as claimed in claim 1, wherein the controller is arranged to encode the instruction such that one channel of the consecutive channels contains information regarding which attribute of the automated light is to be controlled, and the other channel or channels contains information regarding how that attribute is to be set.
5. A control system as claimed in claim 1, wherein the predetermined number of consecutive channels is three.

6. A control system as claimed in claim 1, wherein each channel can be set to any one of 256 values.

7. A control system as claimed in claim 1, wherein the controller is arranged to transmit the output signal in accordance with the DMX-512 protocol.

8. A control system as claimed in claim 2, wherein the encoded instruction corresponds to an entry in a database and the receiver is arranged to decode the encoded instruction by accessing the database.

9. A control system as claimed in claim 2, wherein the controller is arranged to encode the instruction such that one channel of the consecutive channels contains information regarding which attribute of the automated light is to be controlled, and the other channel or channels contains information regarding how that attribute is to be set.

10. A control system as claimed in claim 2, wherein the predetermined number of consecutive channels is three.

11. A control system as claimed in claim 2, wherein each channel can be set to any one of 256 values.

12. A control system as claimed in claim 2, wherein the controller is arranged to transmit the output signal in accordance with the DMX-512 protocol.

13. A control system as claimed in claim 3, wherein the controller is arranged to encode the instruction such that one channel of the consecutive channels contains information regarding which attribute of the automated light is to be controlled, and the other channel or channels contains information regarding how that attribute is to be set.

14. A control system as claimed in claim 3, wherein the predetermined number of consecutive channels is three.

15. A control system as claimed in claim 3, wherein each channel can be set to any one of 256 values.

16. A control system as claimed in claim 3, wherein the controller is arranged to transmit the output signal in accordance with the DMX-512 protocol.

17. A control system as claimed in claim 4, wherein the predetermined number of consecutive channels is three.

18. A control system as claimed in claim 4, wherein each channel can be set to any one of 256 values.

19. A control system as claimed in claim 4, wherein the controller is arranged to transmit the output signal in accordance with the DMX-512 protocol.

20. A control system as claimed in claim 5, wherein each channel can be set to any one of 256 values.

21. A control system as claimed in claim 5, wherein the controller is arranged to transmit the output signal in accordance with the DMX-512 protocol.

22. A control system as claimed in claim 6, wherein the controller is arranged to transmit the output signal in accordance with the DMX-512 protocol.

23. Apparatus for controlling an automated light, comprising:

a receiver arranged to receive an output signal comprising a plurality of channels transmitted repeatedly in sequence from a controller and operate the automated light on the basis of instructions received in the output signal;

wherein the receiver is arranged to receive at least two consecutive channels for each instruction, and combine the information received from all of the at least two channels to determine each instruction.

24. A method for controlling an automated light, comprising:
  - encoding an instruction at a controller;
  - sending a data packet comprising a series of channels from the controller to a receiver, the encoded instruction being sent as a predetermined number of two or more channels of the data packet;
  - receiving the data packet at the receiver;
  - combining the information contained in the predetermined number of consecutive channels at the receiver so as to determine the encoded instruction;
  - decoding the instruction; and
  - controlling the light in accordance with the instruction.
25. A method as claimed in claim 9, wherein:
  - the receiver comprises a memory;
  - the encoded instruction refers to a location in said memory;
  - and the receiver decodes the instruction by accessing the referred memory point.
26. A method as claimed in claim 9, wherein the instruction is encoded so that it can be sent as three channels of a data packet.
27. A method as claimed in any claim 9, wherein the data packet is sent in accordance with the DMX-512 protocol.
28. A method as claimed in claim 10, wherein the instruction is encoded so that it can be sent as three channels of a data packet.
29. A method as claimed in any claim 10, wherein the data packet is sent in accordance with the DMX-512 protocol.
30. A method as claimed in any claim 11, wherein the data packet is sent in accordance with the DMX-512 protocol.